

Added-Sugar Intake on the Rise

So you forego that teaspoonful in your cereal or coffee. But do you check the labels on processed foods for sugar in other forms?

According to USDA's 1994-96 Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals (CSFII), Americans now average 20.5 teaspoons—nearly 3 ounces—of added sugars each day. That's 68.5 pounds per year. And that figure is probably low because of underreporting, says ARS food scientist Shanty Bowman, who is with the agency's Community Nutrition Research Group in Beltsville, Maryland.

Many processed foods and beverages contain added sugars—that is, those which do not occur naturally in the foods themselves. These include white, brown, and raw sugars; various syrups; dextrose; fructose sweetener and liquid fructose; and honey molasses.

"Many foods and beverages containing high amounts of added sugars contribute few nutrients," says Bowman. On the other hand, those containing natural sugars, such as fresh fruit and milk, are also rich in vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients.

Based on U.S. food-supply statistics, Bowman says added sugars have increased in the U.S. diet 28 percent since 1982. "About one-third of our added sugars come from nondiet soft drinks," she says, based on her analysis of the CSFII data. "Next are bakery products—cakes, cookies, pies, and other pastries—which contribute about 13 percent."

She notes that fruit drinks, punches, and ades also make a significant contribution, accounting for 10 percent of added sugars. Dairy desserts and candies each contribute about 5 percent. "It's important for consumers to recognize that they get large amounts of added sugars through processed foods and beverages," she emphasizes in a recent issue of USDA's *Family Economics and Nutrition Review* (vol. 12, no. 2).

Children are more likely to have high intakes of added sugars, whereas adults over age 40 are likely to have lower intakes. Bowman notes that about one-third of children 2 to 5 years old and one-half of those 6 to 11 fall in the group with the highest intakes.

She analyzed data from 14,709 individuals from age 2 to 90—something and divided them into three groups based on the percentage of total calories coming from added sugars. Group 1 got less than 10 percent of total calories from added sugars; group 2 got between 10 and 18 percent; and group 3 more than 18 percent (see table below).

Bowman says group 3 had the lowest intakes for all micronutrients—especially vitamins A, C, B₁₂, and folate and for the minerals calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, zinc, and iron. They also had the lowest intakes of grains, fruits, and vegetables as well as meat, poultry, and fish, and they averaged the most calories. By contrast, group 1 averaged the fewest calories but had much higher intakes of protein and fiber than group 3.

Added sugars and natural sugars are listed together as "sugars" on the nutrition labels. But interested consumers can scan the list of ingredients to look for the presence of added sugars. Products having no added sugars or sugar-containing ingredients may state that on the label in accordance with Food and Drug Administration policy.—By **Judy McBride**, ARS.

This research is part of Human Nutrition, an ARS National Program (#107) described on the World Wide Web at <http://www.nps.ars.usda.gov/programs/appvs.htm>.

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PEGGY GREB (K8919-1)



Beverage Choice Patterns

Average Daily Consumption Per Person

Group	Total calories	Fluid milk	Fruit juices	Soft drinks	Fruit drinks
		Ounces			
1 (<10%)	1,860	6.6	3.6	1.0	0.4
2 (10-18%)	2,040	6.7	2.9	5.7	2.2
3 (>18%)	2,049	5.2	1.9	16.6	4.8